Lafayette Historical Society
NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 133, Lafayette, California 94549

President: William Wakeman (283-3908)
Editor: Shirley Thomson (284-2995)

Vol. ~~XXI~~, No. 2
April 1993

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Spring is here. The flowers are in bloom, and the Society is in the midst of many events. We have started the annual historical walks for fourth-grade students under the leadership of Collette Means and Mary McCosker. We lost two of last year's docents but gained two new people this year, so we are even, but we could use more help. We received an excellent video tape of the Pony Express dedication ceremony held on October 18, 1992, and we are incorporating it into the pre-walk slide show.

On Saturday, April 24, Lafayette United Methodist Church will celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the third schoolhouse built in Lafayette. Activities will begin at the church (955 Moraga Road) about noon with a modified historical walk at 12:30 pm and a ceremony at 2 pm. Nancy Flood is in charge of this affair and is seeking former students from the school. We have contacted three young ladies whom we know attended classes there.

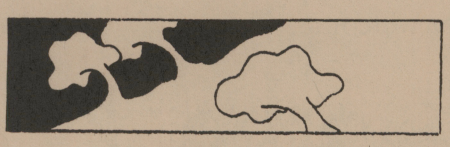
Our speaker for the annual potluck dinner is Bev Ortiz, an authority on the local Sakalan Indians. Her talk will include a slide show on the preparation of acorns for consumption. (Sorry, no samples.) She has co-authored a book titled *The Acorn Industry* and will have copies available for sale at $12.95. More information on the annual meeting can be found on page three.

Hope to see you at the potluck on May 11.

Sincerely,

Bill.

William Wakeman



Dues time again. Payment form inside. Thanks to **Chris Shreiber**, *our newest life member.*

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

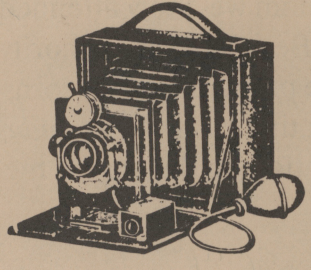
The four people whose names are placed before the membership for election to positions on the Board of Directors are Ruth Dyer, Oliver Hamlin, Frances Hunt, and Ray Peters. Election will take place at a short business meeting on the evening of the annual potluck dinner.

Bill and Collette Means are leaving the Board with the expiration of their term; Frances Hunt would fill that position for a new three-year term. Ruth Dyer, Ollie Hamlin, and Ray Peters are nominated to serve new terms.

Frances Hunt, who was born in Oakland and raised in Berkeley, has lived in Lafayette since 1952. She retired in 1985 from a tax practice in Concord which she owned and ran for twenty-seven years. Currently Mrs. Hunt is treasurer of the Lafayette Senior Recreation Center. > >

A FRIEND IN NEED ...

Special thanks to Mike Martin of 1 Hour Photo of Lafayette for his generosity in printing and enlarging the sepia-toned photographs for the Schoolhouse Number Three permanent display. Mike's photo shop is in the old Pioneer Store building at the south edge of Plaza Park. >



NEW LOOK FOR THE NEWSLETTER

We're delighted to welcome Sue Cross to the LHS newsletter team.

Sue will step in to co-edit our publication, taking charge of layout and publishing. She and her MacIntosh computer will give the publication a whole new look beginning with the next issue. Your present editor, who has handled layout since January 1984 and served as Newsletter Editor and publisher since October 1987, will continue as primary writer.

We welcome the changes Sue will bring and enthusiastically welcome her participation. >

1992-93 Officers and Committee Chairs

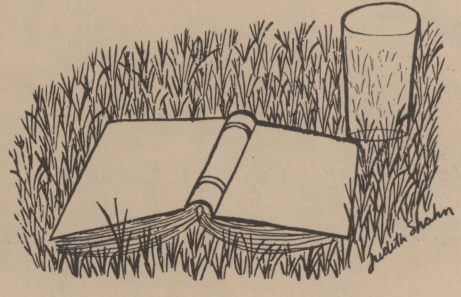
President	*Bill Wakeman*
Vice President	*Jop Van Overveen*
Treasurer	*Shirley Thomson*
Recording Secretary	*Ruth Dyer*
Corresponding Secretary	*Ollie Hamlin*
Annual Potluck Dinner	*Richard Johnson and Ollie Hamlin*
Archives	*Irma Somerton*
Book Sales	*Ruth Dyer*
Fire Engine	*George Wasson*
Hist. Displays	*Bill & Irma Somerton*
Landmarks	*Bob Means*
Membership	*Jack Bailey*
Oral History	*Ray Peters, Marechal Duncan, George Wasson, and Nancy Flood*
Newsletter	*Shirley Thomson*
Program	*Jop Van Overveen*
Publicity	*Diddo Clark*
Walking Tours	*Collette Means*

DUES

Student membership	*$2.50*
Family membership	*$10.00*
Business membership	*$50.00*
Life membership	*$100.00*

BOARD MEETING

The next meeting of LHS Board members and committee chairs is scheduled for Tuesday, June 15, at Bill Wakeman's home, 3489 St. Mary's Road. The new video will be shown. Members are welcome. >



– ANNUAL DINNER MEETING – MAY 11, 1993

BEV ORTIZ
Authority on Area Indian Cultures, will speak on

Local Indians and
Mt. Diablo and Indian Mythology Associated with It

6:00 Social Hour
7:00 Potluck Dinner
8:00 Program

Veterans Memorial Hall, Mt. Diablo Boulevard at First Street

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Please bring a dish of six to eight servings for each person attending.
Hearty salads, meat or seafood entrees, and side dishes are needed.
Please also bring your own serving utensils.
Board members will bring desserts. Dinner drinks will be provided.

For more information, call Richard Johnson (283-0199) or Ollie Hamlin (283-6822 days, 284-1446 eves).

Bev Ortiz, Annual Meeting Speaker

Anthropologist, writer, and researcher in California Indian cultures, Bev Ortiz will speak at the May 11 annual meeting. Among other aspects of local Indian culture, Ms. Ortiz will show how acorns were processed to make various kinds of foods.

Presently busy with doctoral studies in UCB's Anthropology Department, our speaker is nevertheless also writing an ethno-history of Mt. Diablo and contributes a regular column for *News from Native California*, a quarterly magazine featuring articles by and about California Indians.

Ms. Ortiz works closely with California Indians from various tribal groups throughout the state. She teaches classes in traditional skills and technologies such as basketry, string-making, Indian games and toys.

She has worked as a naturalist for East Bay Regional Parks, and it is just possible you may have met her there – or at Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve, Sunol Wilderness, or Coyote Hills. >

LAFAYETTE'S FIRST FOUR SCHOOLHOUSES

by William Wakeman

The first schoolhouse was located on what is presently called Golden Gate Way between First and Second Streets. Classes were started in the winter of 1853 with Benjamin Shreve as the first teacher.

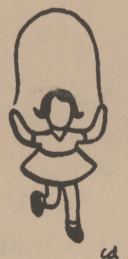
Shreve, born in Pennsylvania, had taught school for a time in southern Kentucky before he joined a wagon train for California in 1852. Without luck in mining, he was on his back east when he stopped in what was to become Lafayette. He taught school here in the winters of both 1853 and 1854. School was held only in winter so children could help on the farms in the other seasons.

It was, by the way, Benjamin Shreve who named Lafayette when he applied to have a post office in the general merchandise store he opened near the site of the first school. Later he moved to Plaza Way. He chose Centerville as the community name, but it was denied. His second choice was Lafayette. His reasons for choosing it are not known. It may have been to honor the general, or perhaps it was named to honor his wife's birthplace, Lafayette County, Illinois.

Schoolhouse Number Two was located west of the Lafayette United Methodist Church. It was built in 1871 at a cost of $825 on a lot that cost $41.

A unique feature of this school was the grade numbering system used. A child started school in the eighth grade and graduated from the first. Grade level advancement required the student to get a score of seventy percent or better on tests given in October and May.

This building was moved to Mt. Diablo Boulevard in 1925 and used to house the post office, library, and telephone exchange. It is now the home of the Kilarney House Bar.



Schoolhouse Number Three is now a part of the Lafayette United Methodist Church. Note the bell tower. It was built in 1893 for $2000 on property that cost $400. It remained a schoolhouse until 1927 when it was used as a church.

There is some question as to whether the bell in the tower is the old school bell or one transferred from the Good Templars Hall in 1927.

Schoolhouse Number Four stood where the present Lafayette Elementary School is, at the corner of School Street and Moraga Road. When it opened, the building had three classrooms with the first, second, and third grades in one room; fourth, fifth, and sixth grades in another; and the seventh and eighth grades in the third room.

After graduating, students went to either San Ramon High in Danville or to Mt. Diablo High in Concord. Those students attending classes at Mt. Diablo rode the Sacramento Northern train to Concord every day. Those going to Danville transferred to a bus in Walnut Creek.

When I started school in January 1927, the building had been enlarged to five rooms. There were then two grades per room. By the time I graduated in 1934 the fifth room was in use as a kindergarten. Graduation—*one of the* biggest social events of the year—was in Town Hall just across School Street. >

Thanks to Ruth Dyer and Bill Wakeman for finding and supplying the following article. It is copied verbatim from the Friday, October 5, 1951, issue of the Lafayette Sun, page one. —Ed.

Wild Song Roars on Amplifier at Community Church

There seems to be some question about whether it was 2 a.m. or 1 a.m.—there was that change-over from Daylight Saving to Standard Time, you remember—but there wasn't any doubt about the stentorian, raucous song which reverberated in the wee hours Sunday morning from the Lafayette Community Methodist Church.

Over and over—at least five times—the recording of "Don't Roll Those Bloodshot Eyes at Me" sounded over the church's loudspeaker system.

Residents for blocks around, accustomed to hearing the daily 6 p.m. chimes from the same loudspeaker, or hymns at Easter and Christmas, were awakened by the blare.

One of those awakened was Rev. Harry Shaner, the pastor. Dashing out in his pajamas and robe, he noticed that the main fuse box had been wired, chained, and locked. He dashed to the office door, but the door knobs had been removed.

The Rev. Shaner went to the vestibule of the church, where, on the master panel, he turned off the switch for the amplifying system, and he returned to the parsonage next door to dress more adequately.

"They evidently were still in the church building, because after the song had stopped for about a minute and a half, it was turned on again," Rev. Shaner recounted later. "I called the sheriff's office at Martinez."

The pastor then went out, and by pulling the chain which had been wired to a post, forced the fuse box switch until all the current had been disengaged—and the "Don't Roll" refrain finally subsided.

Meanwhile, people had been gathering. Deputy Sheriffs Lee Gallamore and Earl Falkenstrom arrived, and they and Rev. Shaner entered the office from inside the church, after going through the church's main door, which had not been tampered with. The knobs of the inside office door had also been removed, so it was something of a trick to get into the office.

Once inside, they found the recording machine still playing the record, with a whiskey shot glass atop the spindle, so that the resultant pressure kept repeating the playing. Against the outside office door two big chairs and a desk had been propped.

On top of the desk were the knobs from the two doors.

Nothing else had been disturbed or damaged; nothing had been stolen. Just some enterprising pranksters, the sheriff's men figured.

"I think it was done by college kids or someone who knew something about the amplifying system, electricity and the church layout," Rev. Shaner said.

Then, smiling a bit, the minister remarked: "A more fitting selection could have been chosen by the pranksters. If there's a serious desire for 2 a.m. services, I'm perfectly willing to arrange them." >

UPDATE ON THAT MEMORABLE NIGHT OF MUSIC

by William Wakeman

"Don't Roll Those Bloodshot Eyes at Me" would fall into the secular music category, don't you think? It was not something folks expected to emanate from the Methodist Church in the middle of the night back in 1951.

A little background . . .

From 1927 until after World War II the Lafayette Methodist Church announced its services by manually ringing the church bell. Then an automatic record player with amplifier system was installed and the church played chime music to announce services and celebrate holidays. It also marked the noon hour and evening.

Then came the night in 1951 when the quiet of the sleeping village was shattered by a loud rendition of "Don't Roll Those Bloodshot Eyes at Me," repeated over and over on the church's amplifier system. It was quite an event—as the *Sun*'s reporter detailed.

And the miscreants got clean away that night.

However, as it happened, this Lafayette incident was written up in every local paper and the story even made it into the *New York Times* and *Stars and Stripes*. Red Skelton included the incident in one of the skits on his television show. And all that publicity was the undoing of the guilty parties. They collected the articles written about the incident and bragged about what they had done, so some were found out.

Some forty-one years later there is a sequel to those events.

When Barbara and Bob Bupp stopped in a southern California church for a few minutes of meditation at the completion of a recent trip, the young minister there asked where they came from. When he found they were from Lafayette, he admitted to them he was one of the group of Acalanes High School and Diablo Valley College students responsible for that memorable night.

Reverend Harry Shaner told this story at the church's January 24 sanctuary dedication service. >

SCHOOLHOUSE ONE HUNDRED YEARS OLD

Lafayette's Schoolhouse Number Three, now the historic narthex of Lafayette United Methodist Church, will be the focus of a celebration marking its hundredth year of service on Saturday, April 24 beginning at noon.

Come to the old school on the 24th and join people who were students at the school, community leaders, church and LHS members, and others interested in preserving and celebrating Lafayette's history.

Call Nancy Flood (evenings, 283-3409) for more information. >

UPCOMING EVENTS ...

April 24 . . . . . 100th Anniversary Celebration Schoolhouse Number Three—Laf. United Methodist Church, noon—Nancy Flood, 283-3409 eve. for information

May 1 and 15 . . . . Friends of Laf. Lib. Book Sale—Laf. Com. Ctr., 9am - noon

May 11 . . . . . LHS Annual Meeting and Potluck Dinner—Veterans Mem. Hall, 6pm—for information call Richard Johnson (283-0199) or Ollie Hamlin (283-6822)

May 21 and 22 . . . Clayton Hist. Soc. Spring Garden Tour—672-0240 for information

LAFAYETTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 133
Lafayette, California 94549

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Lafayette Historical Society
POST OFFICE BOX 133 LAFAYETTE, CALIF. 94549

MEMBER INFORMATION

_____

last name | first name | spouse's first name

_____

street address | phone number

_____

city, state, zip code | date

Annual dues: Please check appropriate line indicating amount of dues payable, attach your check in the amount shown—adding any contribution you can make toward the fire engine repair fund—and mail to **Lafayette Historical Society, P.O. Box 133, Lafayette, California 94549**.

___ Student membership - $ 2.50
___ Family membership - $ 10.00
___ Business membership - $ 50.00
___ Life membership - $100.00

DUES $_____
Contribution to help maintain fire engine _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: $_____

Please indicate your areas of special interest

___ Archives
___ Landmarks
___ Fire engine
___ Telephone committee
___ Annual potluck dinner committee
___ Research
___ Other: _____
___ Oral history
___ Photograph collection
___ Newspaper clippings
___ Walking tours
___ Displays